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Two major Aboriginal economic development initiatives (00/06/23)

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MACTAQUAC (CNB) -- Two economic development initatives for Aboriginal people in New Brunswick were announced today.

Details on the Computer Operating Systems Engineering Certification (COSEC) Program and the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program (AYIP) were released by Premier Bernard Lord, Fredericton MP Andy Scott, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Brad Green, and Alex Dedam, co-chair of the Joint Economic Development Initiative.

"We believe the key to future prosperity for Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people will be found in co-operative economic development and educational initiatives, such as the two we are announcing today," Premier Bernard Lord said. "We want to continue to work with Aboriginal people to increase economic development, especially through the Joint Economic Development Initiative."

"These programs are another way the Government of Canada is demonstrating its commitment to developing the skills of Aboriginal people in New Brunswick," Scott said. "By focusing on youth and new technologies, we are working with Aboriginal communities to improve their ability to compete in today's global economy."

"It is encouraging to see the commitment of both levels of government to our youth and to developing a strong knowledge-based economy within First Nations across New Brunswick," Joint Economic Development Initiative co-chair Alex Dedam said. "With our fast-growing youth population and the increasing importance of information technology in our society, these are two key areas to the future economic growth of our communities."

The COSEC Program began in April 2000 and is offered at the Tobique First Nation Employment and Training Centre. Twenty-eight students enrolled in the course to become Computer Operated Systems Engineers. The course lasts for 60 weeks, and there is a 10-week work placement at the end. Funding for this program totals $455,000, and is being provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), the Regional Development Corporation and the Department of Training and Employment Development.

The goal of the AYIP is to provide young Aboriginals with the opportunity to work with the Regional Economic Development Commissions, the Community Business Development Corporations, the Canada/New Brunswick Business Service Centre and various federal and provincial departments in the field of economic development to help them gain meaningful experience. The program provides for the hiring of a total of 32 unemployed or under-employed interns with post-secondary education over a period of three years. The cost of the AYIP is $806,770 and it is funded by INAC, ACOA and RDC.

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MEDIA CONTACTS: Alison Aiton, ACOA, 506-444-6144; Patricia Ellis, INAC, 902-661-6232; Sadie Perron, RDC, 506-453-8545; Tracey Cole, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, 506-453-6543; Shawn Hearn, Training and Employment Development, 506-453-2568.